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ABSTRACT

This paper presents research surveying the responses of university students enrolled in music classes for nonmusic majors with regard to several aspects of required concert attendance. Groups of subjects (n=258) enrolled in courses with required concert attendance were compared to those in courses without such a requirement. Results indicated that required concert attendance was a positive or, at worst, neutral experience for the students. The students found attending concerts presented by the university music department or concert series to be an enjoyable activity, and reported a fairly high degree of awareness of campus concerts. While all expressed an inclination to attend concerts in the future, this was significantly stronger for the students with the concert attendance requirement. The structure of assignments and expectations, specific preparation for the concert experience, integration of literature studied with performance ensembles, or subsequent discussion of the experience, might be factors which could have an impact on the perceived or actual value of these requirements. The primary implication from this research for instructional practice is that including a concert attendance requirement is likely to increase interest of students and to build positive attitudes toward art music. (Author/DK)

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Effects of Required Concert Attendance on Attitudes of College Students Enrolled in Music Courses for Nonmusic Majors

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to survey the responses of university students enrolled in music classes for nonmusic majors with regard to several aspects of required concert attendance. Groups of subjects enrolled in courses with required concert attendance (n = 258), or without such a requirement (n = 183), were compared. Results indicated that required concert attendance was a positive or, at worst, neutral experience for the students. The students found attending concerts presented by the university music department or concert series to be an enjoyable activity, and reported a fairly high degree of awareness of campus concerts. While all expressed an inclination to attend concerts in the future, this was significantly stronger for the students with the concert attendance requirement. The structure of assignments and expectations, specific preparation for the concert experience, integration of literature studied with performance ensembles, or subsequent discussion of the experience, might be factors which could have an impact on the perceived and/or actual value of these requirements, and would be fruitful areas for further study.

Introduction

One of the goals of music courses designed for students who are not majoring in music is "building future audiences" (College Music Society [CMS], 1989, p. 58). Other related goals ranked almost as highly include "increasing music literacy" and "expanding known/familiar repertory" (CMS, 1989, p. 58). Presumably to assist in attaining these goals, a feature found in many music courses for nonmajors is required concert attendance.

Results of the survey conducted by the College Music Society Study Group on the **Content of the Undergraduate Music Curriculum** indicated that 73 percent of the 430 institutions queried in 1989 required concert attendance for undergraduates enrolled in music in general studies courses (CMS, 1989). This number represents a substantial increase over data obtained in a similar survey in 1982, in which "approximately one third" of the respondents indicated concert attendance requirements (CMS, 1989, p. 39). Little other research was found that investigated the effects of required concert attendance.

These CMS data give broad-brush impressions of concert attendance requirements and they provide evidence of the importance placed on concert attendance for students enrolled in courses such as music appreciation or fundamentals; however, they stop short of assessing the effectiveness of these requirements in meeting the goals mentioned above. The present study was designed to examine students' opinions related to attending concerts, as a first step in evaluating the effects of concert attendance requirements on attitudes toward concert attendance, as well as on attitudes toward the requirement itself.

Note: The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Judith Jantzen and Earl Paddock.

For an issue of such importance, there has been little previous research related specifically to concert attendance by college students. Two variables that have been investigated pertain to students' patterns of concert attendance and reactions to the music heard.

Flowers (1983) examined several related variables, including the types of concerts selected by students enrolled in classes for undergraduate nonmusic majors when they were required to attend, but free to choose from university and community events. Results indicated that student solo recitals, performances by choirs and symphony orchestras, pops concerts, and musical theater were selected most frequently, that there was inconsistency between the genres of concerts students expressed desires or intentions to attend and those they actually attended, and that convenience was a factor in the choices made. Flowers also found that, in written reports about the concerts they had attended, "almost all students wrote highly positive concert reports; however they frequently lacked the vocabulary to adequately describe what they liked, disliked, or even remembered" (p. 25).

Cassidy and Speer (1990) also studied students' written responses to concerts attended to fulfill course requirements in a music class for elementary education majors. Variables examined included differential instruction in music terminology, and results indicated that instruction including vocabulary-plus-listening training "facilitated subjects' transfer of terminology into a new setting while vocabulary-only training did little to change verbal behavior" (p. 19). It was also observed that, in reporting on the first concert attended, students' comments tended to be about the concert situation itself, rather than about the music. Students' concerns with such things as the performer's mode of dress, concert etiquette, or confusion about when to applaud, seemed to indicate lack of experience in attending formal concert programs.

Nonmusic major students' listening competency, as well as evaluations of the concert experience as affected by concert length, students' judgement of the quality of the music, and student' judgment of the quality of the performance, were examined by Lorek, Robinson, and Pembrook (1990, November). The conclusion that music appreciation instruction may have had a positive effect on music listening competencies is similar to Cassidy's (1990) results. Students consistently rated the quality of the performance higher than the quality of the music. Lorek, Robinson and Pembrook conclude that this finding "illustrates the powerful and impressive nature of live performance for college nonmajors" (p. 11). Length was an important factor in ratings of concerts, with students preferring shorter individual pieces and concerts. A positive relationship was found between students' overall ratings of concerts as related to their expressed desire to attend a similar concert, and it was concluded that a good initial concert experience for these students may be a factor in their future concert attendance.

Informal observations also contributed anecdotal background information considered in designing the current study. From discussions with teachers about class reactions to the required concert attendance assignments, it appears that students' initial responses may be negative, as observed through

verbal or nonverbal behavior such as groans, comments, questions, or facial expressions; however, these attitudes often appear to change as a result of attending the performances. Some evidence of this may be obtained from students' written concert reports. It is not uncommon for students to respond with unsolicited comments about the experience or the class requirement when asked to write a reaction paper to the initial concert attended. For example, the following excerpts from an assignment to write a free-form reaction to a required concert are typical of those submitted by students enrolled in classes for nonmusic majors:

"I have to admit that my first thoughts about going to this were a little negative, but once it started I really enjoyed the performance; Overall the concert wasn't as bad as I thought it would be; Well, I "survived" this symphony concert and learned that symphony [sic] music can be exciting and enjoyable; I went to the concert feeling as if I was wasting my time, and I came out with such a happy feeling inside, it was as if I had won a hundred dollars. "

The following excerpts from student reaction papers also indicated that some students lacked awareness of concert opportunities on campus. They also conveyed students' desires to attend future events as a result of the experience:

"I have always liked jazz, and yet had never realized that we had such a talented group of students at the University that could provide such quality entertainment; Attending the concert opened my eyes to the wonderful musicians of our campus and has inspired me to want to attend more of these performances; I enjoyed the experience and would definitely like to see another opera; I would enjoy going to more concerts and exploring what the university has to offer; It is a shame that I have to attend [sic] the university for almost four years and have never attended a symphony performance. I will be much more inclined to go after this experience."

Written reactions discussing the requirements itself included the following:

"I am glad that concert reports were a required activity for this class. Even though it was an inconvenience to take time out of a busy schedule to attend two concerts, the experience was worth it: I am glad that this was one of our assignments because it gave me a reason to go to and hear a concert and I really did enjoy it; Thank you for making me go to realize that music can be enjoyable, even without words to go along."

Although the statements above appear to reflect attitudes toward concert attendance, they were not gathered in a systematic manner. The purpose of this research was to obtain a more objective assessment of the responses of university students enrolled in music classes for nonmajors about several aspects of required concert attendance. Specifically, the students' awareness of concert offerings, the enjoyability of the concert attendance activity, future concert attendance plans, attitude towards required concert attendance, and reasons for previous concert attendance were of interest.

Procedures

Subjects for this study were university undergraduate students enrolled in courses for nonmusic majors, including music literature, music fundamentals, and methods classes for elementary teachers ($n = 441$). Data were gathered from a total of nine class sections over a period of two and one-half years at a large midwestern university. Classes were selected based on the willingness of the instructor to participate and to provide class time for administrations of the survey.

The study was designed to compare student's reactions to attending concerts in courses with and without a concert attendance requirement. For classes with the requirement, students attended two concerts of their choice from among those presented by the university music department or concert series, and wrote a reaction paper. A total of 258 subjects in five sections of classes with concert attendance requirements completed the survey. Subjects enrolled in four sections of classes which did not include concert attendance requirements totalled 183. Both of these groups were heterogeneous with regard to inclusion of nonmajor music education, music fundamentals, and music literature classes. Because the only variable under investigation was the concert attendance requirement, preparation in sections with the requirement was limited to concert etiquette instruction. Surveys were administered to all students near the end of the semester, subsequent to the date when all concert requirements were due to have been met. All surveys were completed anonymously.

Two versions of the survey were constructed, containing slight variations, mainly in verb tenses, to accommodate the presence or absence of the requirement. All surveys included demographic data related to course enrollment. There were four items related to (1) awareness of concert offerings, (2) attitudes towards concert attendance, (3) plans to attend concerts in the future, and (4) attitude toward concert attendance requirements (see Figure 1). An additional item presented a checklist of possible reasons for attending campus concerts during prior semesters.

Figure 1

Concert Survey Items

1. I am aware of the university's concert offerings:

   Yes Vaguely No

2. I think attending concerts is:

   Very enjoyable Enjoyable All right Tolerable Not Enjoyable

3. I plan to attend one or more concerts after this semester:

   Definitely Very Likely Likely Not likely No possibility

4. I think the [a] course requirement to attend concerts for me has [would have] been:

   Very valuable Valuable Somehwat Valuable
   Not too valuable Not valuable at all

5. If I have attended university concerts prior to this semester, it was because I (check all that apply):

   ___ enjoy the music
   ___ had friends or relatives performing
   ___ was invited to attend with friend or relative
   ___ was required to attend for another university class
   ___ was curious
   ___ other (please state)_____

The responses to each item were assigned numerical values for analysis, depending on the number of choices. The most positive response received the highest value. For the question about plans for the future concert attendance, the sixth response, "will not be on campus," was assigned a zero. Dichotomous data from survey item 5 in which subjects checked off reasons for previous concert attendance were analyzed as percentages (see Figure 1).

Results

Responses of the groups without the concert attendance requirement were compared to those of the group with the requirement using *t* tests. Results comparing group means on awareness concert offerings and enjoyability of attending concerts indicated no significant differences between the groups' responses (see Table 1). There were significant differences between indications of plans to attend concerts in the future and on the concert attendance requirement.

In both cases, the requirement group rated plans to attend future concerts, $t(439) = 3.02$, $p < .05$, and the value of the requirement itself, $t(439) = 7.17$, $p < .05$, significantly higher than did the no-requirement group (see Table 1).

Summary Table:
T-Test Comparisons of Survey Items for Groups with Concert Attendance Required and Concert Attendance Not Required

	n	M	SD	t
Awareness of concert offerings				
Required	258	2.51	0.62	1.37
Not Required	183	2.43	0.59	
Enjoyability of attending concerts				
Required	258	3.95	0.83	1.94
Not Required	183	3.80	0.78	
Plan to attend concerts in the future				
Required	258	3.15	1.18	3.02*
Not Required	183	2.79	1.27	
Value of concert attendance requirement				
Required	258	3.62	0.98	7.17*
Not Required	183	293	1.01	

*$p < .05$

To indicate reasons for previous concert attendance, subjects were asked to check each applicable reason from among the 6 listed for attending concerts during prior semesters. For each group, the number of subjects indicating each reason was summed and divided by *n* to obtain the percentage of subjects in each group indicating each response (see Table 2). Because the questions were not mutually exclusive, sums of question percentages may exceed 100%. For both groups, "enjoying the music" received the highest percentages of responses. The order of items from most to least frequently selected was the same except that the requirement group indicated "required for class" with greater frequency.

Table 2
Percentage of Subjects Indicating Reasons for Concert Attendance

	Groups	
	Concerts Required	Concerts Not Required
	(n = 258)	(n = 183
Reasons		
Enjoy the music	28	40
Friend/relative performing	22	28
Invited to attend	19	26
Required for a class	31	21
Curious	7	14
Other	5	4

Discussion

In each comparison between groups with and without the requirement, students in the requirement group expressed more positive attitudes than students in the no-requirement group. In two cases the difference between groups was statistically significant. Based on these observations, it might be concluded that required concert attendance was a positive or, at worst, neutral experience for the students; further, there was no negative impact on their expressed attitudes. Reactions to the actual requirements to attend concerts support the above conclusion. The group with the requirement rated the value of the requirement significantly higher than the group with no concert attendance requirement. On a restricted 5-point scale, a 0.69 point difference between groups would appear substantial. Converting the scores to terminology used on the survey indicates that the group with the requirement rated the requirement itself almost two-thirds of the way between "somewhat valuable" and "valuable," while the group with no concert attendance requirement rated the requirement below the "somewhat valuable" category.

Both groups reported almost equal awareness of concerts. It would appear that the presence or absence of a concert requirement did not have an effect on this item. It is surprising that the level of awareness was not comparatively higher as a result of being required to attend concerts. Perhaps those who enroll in any music course are interested in music and, therefore, are aware of concerts on campus. The responses from both groups fall somewhere between a vague and full awareness of concert offerings.

Students enrolled in the music courses appeared to enjoy attending concerts and indicated intentions to do so in the future. On the rating scale employed, a score of 4 (out of 5) indicated that attending concerts was thought to be "enjoyable." The means for both groups were close enough in this category to indicate a generally positive attitude toward concert attendance.

Intentions to attend future concerts were also significantly different between the groups. The group with the requirement was more favorably disposed to attend future concerts. The numerical means hovered around the middle response ("likely") in the scale related to future concerts attendance plans. Future research might examine the consistency of such intentions expressed at the end of a semester of study and experience with actual concerts attended in following years.

Enjoyment of the music was the most frequent reason given for attending concerts in the past. This category received the greatest percentage of responses when the group responses are

combined (68%). "Invitations to attend" and "participation of friends or relatives" each were indicated by about a fourth of the subjects. A higher number than expected marked "required to attend for a university class;" this is surprising since most of the courses from which subjects were drawn were at the entry level. It is conjectured that some subjects included the current semester when answering this item. It appears that the students surveyed found attending concerts presented by the university music department or concert series to be an enjoyable activity. They reported a fairly high degree of awareness of campus concerts, and they were inclined to attend concerts in the future.

In addition to addressing affective goals, such as building future audiences through developing positive attitudes toward attending music performances, it may be assumed that concert attendance also serves cognitive goals such as expanding familiar repertoire, identifying musical characteristics, and learning to analyze and write about music or musical performance. Requiring undergraduate students enrolled in courses for nonmusic majors to attend concerts seems to be a widespread practice. Little is known yet, however, about how these assignments function for the students. While the responses to this survey tended to be positive, they were not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Future research might seek to explore ways for these experiences to be made even more meaningful to students.

Investigation of the effects of required concert attendance, and/or effect of the nature of related assignments, on meeting academic goals would be interesting topics for future research. For example, the effects of careful advance communication between performers, conductors, and class instructors to enable performed pieces to be included as illustrations of concepts under study or as the object of study in the courses might be investigated. Assigning students specific questions to be answered about each concert, preconcert investigation of composers and pieces to be heard, or follow-up class discussions are all worthy areas of study. A longitudinal study could also assess whether the effects noted in this study are short- or long-term.

Implications for Instruction

The primary implication from this research for instructional practice is that including a concert attendance requirement is likely to increase interest of students and to build positive attitudes toward art music. By structuring course assignments and expectations to include live concerts, many students become exposed to such events, perhaps, for the first time in their lives. For these students, a class discussion of appropriate audience behavior and general concert etiquette may make the experience less intimidating and more enjoyable. Some discussion and follow-up of one or two concerts would give students an opportunity to discuss their reactions and ask questions about the concert. Professors could also make an attempt to include pieces for study that major ensembles or soloists will be performing during the term. All of these instructional practices could be factors which should have an impact on the perceived and/or actual value of instructional requirements and practices.

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